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Toronto gets an 'A' on climate action

The Toronto Star

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Byline: Jeremy Hodges and Demetrios Pogkas Bloomberg

Body

Cities including Toronto are stepping up efforts to slash pollution, often wresting the fight against climate change away from national governments.

That's the conclusion of CDP, a non-profit group that pushes institutions to detail their greenhouse-gas emissions. The group included Toronto on a list of 43 cities around the world to receive an A grade out of out of 625 considered.

Almost 7 per cent of the 625 cities that took part in the report were given the highest rating - joining the CDP "A-list." Among the top scoring, only 28 have set goals for carbon neutrality (balancing emissions of greenhouse gases), climate neutrality (designing wider policies to reduce the overall impact of human activity to the environment) or cutting emissions by half or more.

The other Canadian cities to make the list were Calgary and North Vancouver. CDP gives an "A" rating to any city that reports publicly on its climate adaptation and action plans as well as reporting on emissions inventories and reduction targets. The worst performing cities are handed a "D" although CDP doesn't make those public.

In Toronto, city council has approved the TransformTO climate change strategy, which aims to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions, along with other benefits. The city has set the goal of reducing emissions, based on 1990 levels, by 30 per cent by 2020, 65 per cent by 2030 and 80 per cent by 2050.

Cities are often able to move faster than their national counterparts, CDP says. The group credited 15 cities, including London, Sydney and Boston, with going even further than the A-list cities by setting out the most rigorous plans to achieve carbon or climate neutrality by 2050.

And an even smaller group, consisting of five cities including Paris and San Francisco, have set themselves 100 per cent renewable energy targets. Reykjavik, population 123,000, says it already uses 100 per cent renewable power. How fast other cities get to that point is largely down to the policies they enact. Paris gets 35 per cent of its energy from clean sources, and San Francisco gets almost 60 per cent of its power from renewables, CDP said.

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